

**AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS:**

The following claim set replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

- 1-9. (canceled)
10. (currently amended) A device [(2)] for separating magnetic particles from a liquid mixture thereof, the device comprising:  
a sample plate defining a plurality of wells for containing a liquid mixture comprised of a liquid and magnetic particles to be separated therefrom,  
and  
a plurality of substantially aligned magnets [(3)] positioned relative to the sample plate so that each of the magnets is capable of being introduced into the liquid mixture contained in a respective one of the wells, wherein the magnetic particles are separated from the liquid, and wherein some of the magnets [(3)] are inversely oriented.
11. (currently amended) A separating device as defined in claim 10, in which about half of the magnets [(3)] are inversely oriented.
12. (currently amended) A separating device as defined in claim 11, in which substantially every second magnet [(3)] is inversely oriented.
13. (currently amended) A separating device as defined in claim 10, in which magnets [(3)] are disposed in several rows of several magnets.
14. (currently amended) A separating device as defined in claim 10, in which the magnets [(5)] are united to form one single piece [(2)].

15. (currently amended) A separating device as defined in claim 10, in which the magnets [(3)] are permanent magnets whose length/diameter ratio is at least about 2:1.
16. (currently amended) An apparatus [(1)] for separating magnetic particles from a liquid mixture comprised of a liquid and the magnetic particles, wherein the apparatus comprises: comprising  
a sample plate defining a plurality of wells for containing a liquid mixture comprised of a liquid and magnetic particles to be separated therefrom, and  
a vertically movable separating device [(2),] which comprises a magnet head including several substantially aligned magnets [(3)] positioned relative to the sample plate so that each of the magnets is capable of being introduced into the liquid mixture contained in a respective one of the wells, wherein the magnetic particles are separated from the liquid, and wherein some of the magnets [(3)] are inversely oriented.
17. (currently amended) An apparatus as defined in claim 16, wherein the separating device further comprises:  
a vertically movable comprising a well-like casing [(8)] which defines a plurality of casing wells for receiving a respective one of the magnets of the magnet head, wherein  
the casing wells are positioned relative to the sample plate wells of the sample plate such that each of the sample plate wells is capable of receiving a respective one of the casing wells, and wherein for insertion of each magnet (3)  
the magnetic particles of the liquid mixture in the sample wells adhere to a separating area of the casing wells in response to the casing wells and the

magnets received therein being moved vertically as a unit into a receiving relationship within the sample wells.

18. (currently amended) An apparatus as defined in claim 17, in which the casings ~~[[ (8) ]]~~ are united to form one single piece ~~[[ (7) ]]~~.
19. (new) An apparatus as defined in claim 10, wherein the magnets are elongated, and wherein the apparatus comprises a support plate, and wherein the magnets are joined to and extend outwardly from the support plate.
20. (new) An apparatus for separating magnetic particles from a liquid mixture thereof, the apparatus comprising:
  - a sample plate defining a plurality of wells for containing a liquid mixture comprised of a liquid and magnetic particles to be separated therefrom, and
  - a separating device comprising,
    - (a) a reciprocally movable casing which defines a plurality of casing wells, wherein each of the casing wells is positioned so as to be reciprocally movable into and out of a received relationship with a respective one of the sample plate wells;
    - (b) a reciprocally movable magnet head which comprise a plurality of elongate magnets, wherein at least some of the magnets are inversely oriented, and wherein the magnets are positioned so as to be reciprocally movable into and out of a received relationship with a respective one of the sample plate wells; whereinthe casing having the magnets received within respective ones of the casing wells is capable of being reciprocally moved into contact with the liquid mixture contained in the sample plate wells such that the magnet particles adhere to the separating surface thereof, whereby the magnetic particles are separated from the liquid mixture, and wherein

the magnet head is capable of being reciprocally movable relative to the casing such that the magnets are withdrawn from the casing wells so as to cause the magnetic particles to be released from the separating surface thereof.

21. (new) An apparatus as in claim 20, wherein the magnet head comprises a support plate, wherein each of the magnets are joined to and extend outwardly from the support plate.
22. (new) A method of separating magnetic particles from a liquid mixture thereof comprising:
  - (i) positioning a sample plate defining a plurality of wells for containing a liquid mixture comprised of a liquid and magnetic particles to be separated therefrom relative to a separating device comprised of a reciprocally movable casing a reciprocally movable magnet head which comprises a plurality of elongate magnets, wherein at least some of the magnets are inversely oriented, and
  - (ii) reciprocally moving the casing having the magnets received within respective ones of the casing wells into contact with the liquid mixture contained in the sample plate wells such that the magnet particles adhere to the separating surface thereof, whereby the magnetic particles are separated from the liquid mixture
23. (new) The method of claim 22, further comprising:
  - (iii) reciprocally moving the magnet head relative to the casing such that the magnets are withdrawn from the casing wells so as to cause the magnetic particles to be released from the separating surface thereof.